

## A LOOK AT LOCAL DRUG MARKETS<sup>+</sup>

Local drug markets, like any economic markets, are subject to a wide variety of influences. Thus, in order to disrupt street-level drug markets within local communities, it is necessary to understand how they operate.

As key informants and opinion leaders in their communities, *Pulse Check* sources are well positioned to describe drug market activity, pinpoint its vulnerabilities, and suggest ways to disrupt it. Therefore, during our routine semiannual telephone discussions conducted June 17 through August 5, 2002, we asked *Pulse Check's* 20 law enforcement and 20 epidemiologic/ethnographic sources a series of market-related questions relevant to their specific areas of expertise.

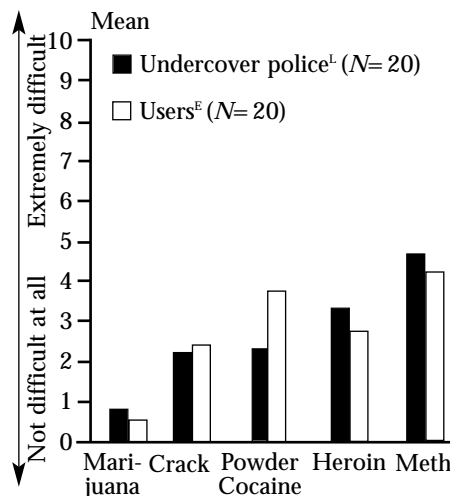
Questions included the following: How difficult is it to buy drugs? When do local drug markets seem most active? When do they slow down? How do street-level dealers communicate with each other, with their suppliers, and with their buyers? How do dealers transport drugs to their selling locations? What else, besides cash, do dealers accept in exchange for drugs? What happens to cash collected by street dealers? What deters street drug buys? How do targeted law enforcement or legislative policy directives impact communities' drug problems? How can local drug market activity be disrupted? What challenges face law enforcement efforts?

In responding, the law enforcement sources provided information and opinions from the undercover police officer's point of view, while the

epidemiologic/ethnographic sources described market activity from the user's perspective.

How difficult is it to buy drugs? (*Exhibits 1–4*) Marijuana is the most easily purchased illicit drug, both for undercover police and users: on average, on a 0–10 scale (with 0 being “not difficult at all” and 10 being “extremely difficult”), the 40 law enforcement and epidemiologic/ethnographic sources rate it at less than 1. Specifically, undercover police find it not difficult at all to purchase marijuana in 9 sites and fairly easy to purchase in another 10 sites. Only in Philadelphia, where police do not make undercover marijuana buys, does the law enforcement source report, anecdotally, that it is moderately difficult to purchase marijuana.

**Exhibit 1.**  
How difficult is it for undercover police and users to buy drugs?  
(Averages, 0–10 scale)



Source: Law enforcement (L) and epidemiologic/ethnographic (E) respondents

Similarly, according to epidemiologic/ethnographic sources, users find it not difficult at all to purchase marijuana in half of the sites and fairly easy to do so in the other half.

Crack is the second most easily purchased illicit drug at the street level. According to undercover police, it is easily obtained in Columbia (SC), Denver, Los Angeles, New York, St. Louis, and Washington, DC. Users can obtain crack easily in Baltimore, Memphis, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC. At the other extreme, it is most difficult to purchase crack in Billings (for users) and Sioux Falls (for undercover police).

Powder cocaine is easily purchased by undercover police in the same six sites as crack. By contrast, it is relatively difficult to purchase street-level powder cocaine in Philadelphia and Detroit. Users find it a bit more difficult than undercover police to purchase powder cocaine, particularly in Billings and Washington, DC.

Heroin is also relatively easy to purchase on the street, but slightly more difficult than crack or powder cocaine, according to law enforcement sources. Undercover purchases are not difficult at all in five sites, while, by contrast, it is difficult to purchase heroin undercover in Billings and Philadelphia and extremely difficult in Sioux Falls. The difficulty in purchasing drugs in Philadelphia results from that city's recent Operation Safe Streets, which has disrupted the more than 200 open-air drug markets. Users, on average, purchase heroin with more difficulty than crack, but with less difficulty than powder cocaine.

<sup>+</sup>The following symbols appear throughout this chapter to indicate type of respondent: <sup>L</sup>Law enforcement respondent, <sup>E</sup>Epidemiologic/ethnographic respondent, <sup>N</sup>Non-methadone treatment respondent, and <sup>M</sup>Methadone treatment respondent.

Exhibit 2.

How difficult is it for undercover police (UP) and users (U) to buy specific drugs across the 20 *Pulse Check* cities?\*

| City      |                  | Heroin          |                | Crack           |                | Powder cocaine  |                | Marijuana       |                | Meth            |                |
|-----------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
|           |                  | UP <sup>L</sup> | U <sup>E</sup> | UP <sup>L</sup> | U <sup>E</sup> | UP <sup>L</sup> | U <sup>E</sup> | UP <sup>L</sup> | U <sup>E</sup> | UP <sup>L</sup> | U <sup>E</sup> |
| Northeast | Boston, MA       | 1               | 3              | 2               | 2              | 1               | 3              | 2               | 1              | 4               | 10             |
|           | New York, NY     | 0               | 0              | 0               | 0              | 0               | 1              | 0               | 0              | 5               | 9              |
|           | Philadelphia, PA | 0/9**           | 1              | 0/6**           | 0              | 0/7**           | 7              | 4.5             | 1              | 7               | 9              |
|           | Portland, ME     | 6               | 3              | 5               | 7              | 4               | 7              | 1               | 1              | 9               | 7              |
| South     | Baltimore, MD    | 4               | 0              | 2               | 0              | 2               | 0              | 1               | 0              | 8               | NR             |
|           | Columbia, SC     | 4               | 7              | 0               | 4              | 0               | 4              | 0               | 2              | 8               | 6              |
|           | El Paso, TX      | 2               | 2              | 4               | 1              | 2               | 1              | 2               | 1              | 4               | 3              |
|           | Memphis, TN      | 2               | 3              | 1               | 0              | 1               | 1              | 1               | 0              | 1               | 0              |
|           | Miami, FL        | 1               | 2              | 1               | 1              | 1               | 0              | 1               | 0              | 9               | 5              |
|           | New Orleans, LA  | 7               | 0              | 2               | 0              | 2               | 3              | 1               | 0              | 8               | 7              |
|           | Washington, DC   | 0               | 0              | 0               | 0              | 0               | 10             | 0               | 0              | 5               | NR             |
| Midwest   | Chicago, IL      | 1               | 1              | 1               | 1              | 3               | 3              | 1               | 1              | 10              | 9              |
|           | Detroit, MI      | 2               | 5              | 1               | 2              | 8               | 3              | 0               | 2              | 6               | 5              |
|           | Sioux Falls, SD  | 10              | 8              | 9               | 8              | 5               | 7              | 2               | 0              | 2               | 0              |
|           | St. Louis, MO    | 0               | 3              | 0               | 2              | 0               | 4              | 0               | 1              | 3               | 3              |
| West      | Billings, MT     | 9               | 10             | 5               | 10             | 4               | 10             | 0               | 1              | 0               | 3              |
|           | Denver, CO       | 0               | 2              | 0               | 4              | 0               | 1              | 0               | 0              | 1               | 2              |
|           | Honolulu, HI     | 4               | 5              | 1               | 4              | 2               | 7              | 0               | 0              | 0               | 2              |
|           | Los Angeles, CA  | 0               | 2              | 0               | 2              | 0               | 6              | 0               | 0              | 0               | 2              |
|           | Seattle, WA      | 4               | 1              | 4               | 1              | 3               | 1              | 2               | 1              | 4               | 1              |

Source: Law enforcement (L) and epidemiologic/ethnographic (E) respondents

\*0–10 scale: 0 = not difficult at all; 10 = extremely difficult

\*\*In Philadelphia, “0” ratings are wholesale, higher ratings are retail.

Of the five drugs discussed, methamphetamine is the most difficult to purchase and has the most variability across the 20 sites. Every degree of difficulty (from 0 through 10) is reported. At the two extremes, it is easiest to purchase methamphetamine in Honolulu, Los Angeles, Memphis, and Sioux Falls, and it is most difficult to purchase it in Boston and Chicago.

Is there any particular day, week, or month that local drug markets seem more active? Four themes emerge in discussions about time-related increases in market activity: personal income, weekends and holidays, police presence, and supply.

#### ■ When personal income goes up:

Law enforcement sources in seven sites—Billings, Columbia (SC),

Memphis, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Seattle, and Washington, DC—note that market activity appears to increase at times of the month when people get paychecks or Government checks, usually around the 1st of the month, sometimes also around the 15th. The Memphis source also notes an increase around tax refund time. Similar observations are made by epidemiologic/ethnographic sources in eight sites: Baltimore, Chicago, Columbia, Denver, El Paso, Los Angeles, Memphis, and New Orleans. The El Paso source adds that more people enter detox toward the end of the month to tide them over until more money becomes available at the beginning of the month and they can once again buy their drugs of choice.

#### ■ On or before weekends and holidays:

The Philadelphia law enforcement source notes that markets appear more active on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays; conversely, they are less active on religious holidays. Similarly, in Sioux Falls, markets appear more active on weekends. In Miami too, dealers sell on the street from Thursday through Sunday, noon till midnight. Individual dealers work 8-hour shifts during that time, with “new guys” getting the late night shift. Additionally, wholesale cocaine sales tend to slow down in Miami from late November to late January, as distributors stock up so that their inventory carries them through the holidays. (This pattern, also reported in the last *Pulse Check*, persisted this year, even after September 11.) In Seattle, where heroin and crack are less available in the suburbs than in downtown areas, market activity increases on Fridays, when outsiders come into town for their weekend supply of those two drugs. Powder cocaine, marijuana, and methamphetamine, however, are available in the suburbs.

■ Weekend or holiday increases are also noted by epidemiologic/ethnographic sources in several sites. The Columbia, Denver, and St. Louis sources associate increased activity on weekends with recreational drug use; the St. Louis and Los Angeles sources associate it with Friday paydays; and the New York source notes that outpatients in treatment take their medications home on weekends. In Washington, DC, heroin dealers do not sell on Sundays, but then they run “specials” on



Monday, when users crave the drug. The Detroit source notes increased drug use during election times, possibly because some users are in a celebratory mode. In Philadelphia, by contrast, it is more difficult to get drugs, especially marijuana, on election and primary days, and 2 days beforehand, because of increased police presence.

■ **When police presence is low:** The New York law enforcement source notes that market activity increases when police presence is low, as was the case after September 11. Conversely, the Baltimore ethnographic source notes that people avoid buying on the street on known law enforcement “target days.”

■ **When supply is up:** In Billings, markets are more active when sellers get their drug shipments.

During this reporting period, has there been a time when users could not buy specific drugs? Only a handful of sources report that users had a hard time buying drugs at any specific time:

■ **Boston, MA<sup>E</sup>:** The heroin supply temporarily dried up in early winter, around January. Some users speculated about possible relationship with the September 11 attacks. This slight drought, however, was followed by an increase in demand and an upsurge in the sale of weighed gram-sized rocks of heroin.

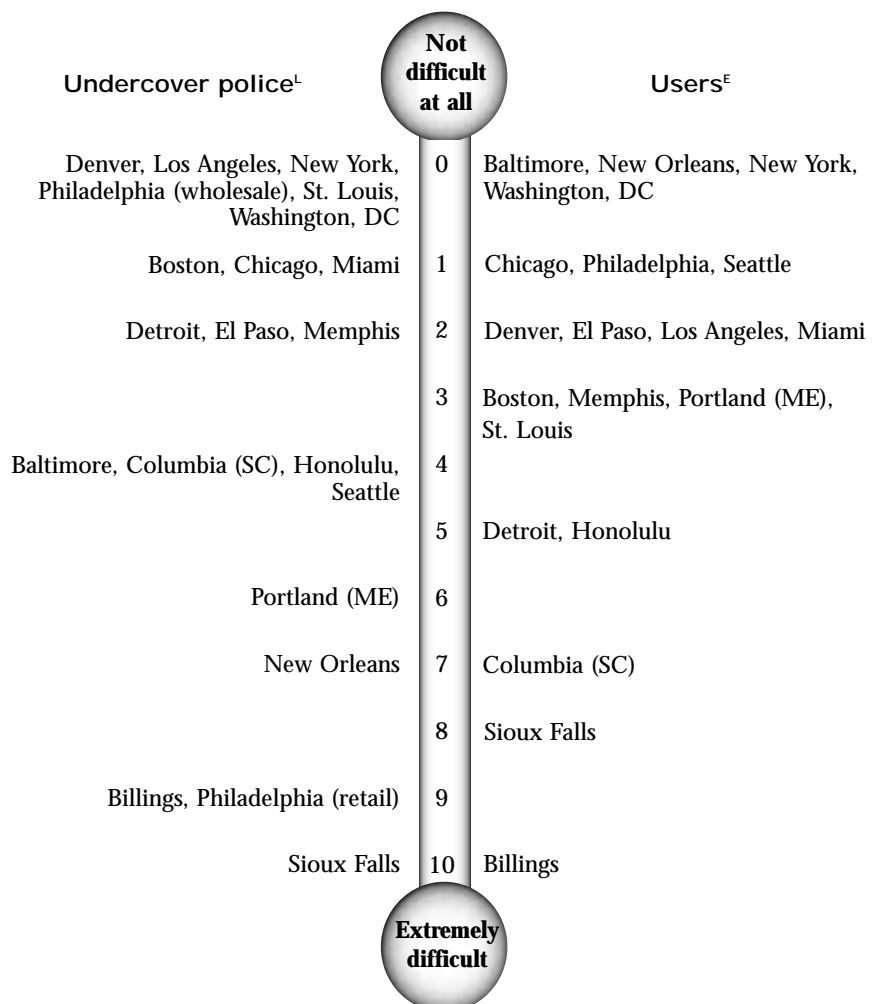
■ **Columbia, SC<sup>L</sup>:** Methamphetamine was temporarily unavailable following the arrest of a clubgoing seller. By the following weekend, a new dealer had taken over.

■ **Denver, CO<sup>L</sup>:** Following any big bust, sellers tend to go underground briefly.

■ **Miami, FL<sup>L</sup>:** While no slowdown is reported during this period, wholesale drug sales in Miami generally slow down during the holiday season from late November through late January. Dealers fill up their inventories before the holidays, then sell from their inventories. Supply is also disrupted whenever a hurricane hits.

■ **St. Louis, MO<sup>E</sup>:** A few recent seizures of “mom-and-pop” methamphetamine labs made it more difficult for small circles of buyers to get the drug. Methamphetamine is still relatively new within that city, as opposed to the surrounding rural areas where it is more established, so any arrest or seizure creates a lull until new contacts are made or new labs are set up.

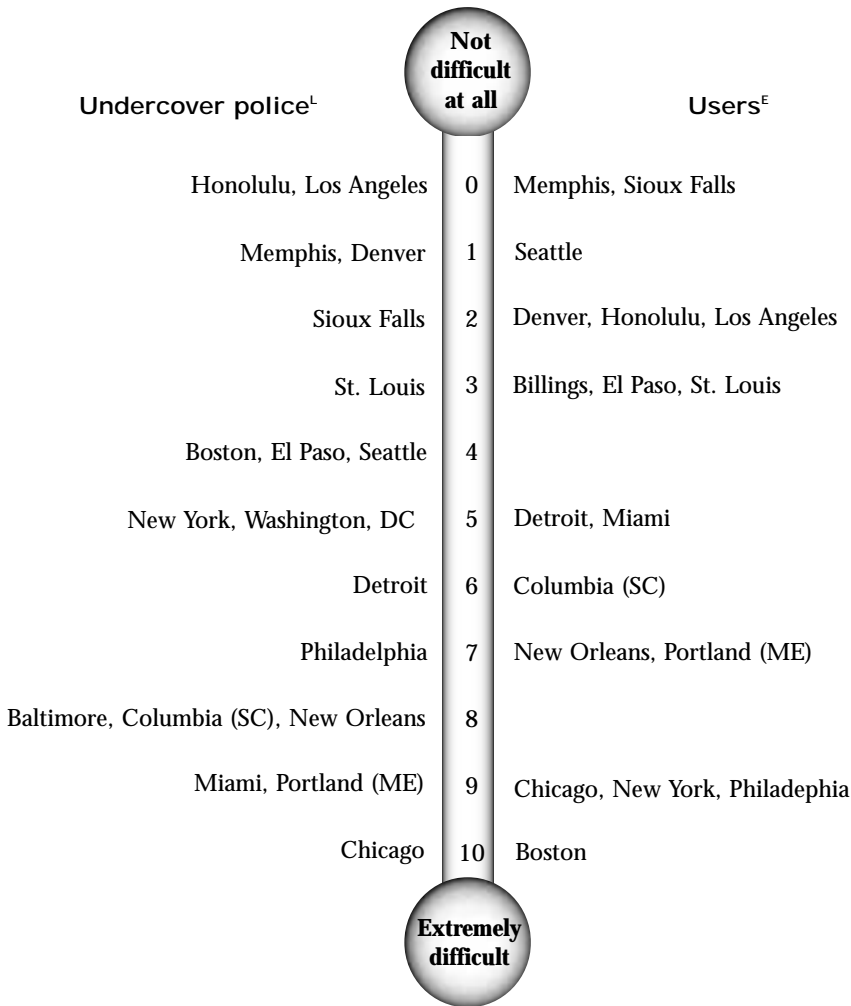
Exhibit 3.  
How difficult is it to buy heroin?



Source: Law enforcement (L) and epidemiologic/ethnographic (E) respondents



Exhibit 4.  
How difficult is it to buy methamphetamine?



Source: Law enforcement (L) and epidemiologic/ethnographic (E) respondents

- **Philadelphia, PA<sup>L</sup>:** Law enforcement reports that Operation Safe Streets has made it more difficult for users to obtain drugs.
- **Portland, ME<sup>L</sup>:** Occasionally, when the source's supply is out, buyers cannot find any crack. These episodes run in streaks.
- **Sioux Falls, SD<sup>L</sup>:** Crack and powder cocaine are periodically unavailable.

How do street-level dealers communicate? (*Exhibit 5*) Law enforcement sources report beepers and cell phones as the most common means of communication between dealers and their buyers, suppliers, and fellow dealers. Regular telephones (mentioned in seven sites) are less common than cell phones: they are mentioned more often in dealer-to-dealer communications rather than in dealer-supplier or dealer-buyer

contexts, and they are sometimes used in rural areas, such as parts of Portland (ME), where cell phones don't always work. Phone cards are used at all market levels in Miami. Some New York dealers use the Internet to communicate with fellow dealers, while Miami dealers use the Internet for both dealer-to-dealer and dealer-to-supplier communications, and Memphis dealers use it to communicate with buyers. Walkie-talkies are used among dealers in Memphis. Hand signals are sometimes used in areas with open street markets, such as Baltimore and Philadelphia. Word of mouth is mentioned in Chicago (dealer-to-buyer), Los Angeles (dealer-to-dealer and dealer-to-buyer), Memphis (dealer-to-dealer and dealer-to-supplier), New Orleans (dealer-to-buyer), and New York (dealer-to-dealer).

Dealers meet face-to-face with other dealers in Chicago, New Orleans, and Washington, DC; with their suppliers in Chicago, Denver, and Memphis; with their buyers in Baltimore, Columbia, Detroit, Honolulu, Memphis, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Seattle, and Washington, DC; and to supplement electronic communication at all levels in Philadelphia. Face-to-face contact between dealers and buyers sometimes occurs at pre-arranged meetings sites (as in Detroit and Memphis) or at well-known street locations (as in Columbia, New York, and Washington, DC). In New York, suppliers contact dealers, but dealers generally do not contact suppliers.

How do dealers transport drugs to their selling locations? Motor vehicles, usually personal cars, are the most frequently mentioned means of moving drugs, according to the vast



majority of law enforcement sources. Other vehicles mentioned include planes (Seattle), rental cars (Portland, ME), taxi cabs (Columbia, SC), motorcycles (Philadelphia), trucks (Memphis, Philadelphia), coach bus (Billings), bikes (Honolulu and Philadelphia), and “trapped vehicles” (vehicles with secret compartments) (Philadelphia). Some dealers carry their drugs on their persons, as in Baltimore, El Paso, Chicago, and Sioux Falls. Foot traffic is mentioned in Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Seattle. Government and private shipping and express mail services are mentioned in Memphis. Dealers in some cities, such as Columbia, sometimes use a third party, such as a girl friend who is not actively involved in selling, to transport their drugs.

What else, besides cash, do dealers accept in exchange for drugs? (*Exhibit 6*) Dealers in 16 of the 20 *Pulse Check* cities accept mostly cash in payment for drugs. Occasionally they accept other modes of payment, such as sex, property or merchandise, other drugs, drug transport, and other items or services. Such alternative payment modes are even more common than cash in four cities: Columbia (SC), El Paso, Honolulu, and Memphis.

Sex is sometimes traded for drugs in all 20 sites, and property or merchandise is sometimes accepted as payment in nearly every site. Specified items include fenced goods (in Denver, Philadelphia, and Seattle), stolen property (in Portland [ME] and Los Angeles), jewelry and audio equipment (in Philadelphia), shoplifted merchandise or groceries (in El Paso and Miami), precursor chemicals (in

Denver, in exchange for methamphetamine), and vehicles (in Memphis). Guns are mentioned in Baltimore and Philadelphia, and Food Stamps are mentioned in New Orleans and Seattle. In El Paso, users often get their drugs in exchange for bikes, toys, other children’s holiday gifts (including those donated by charitable organizations), and even holiday turkeys. In nine cities, mostly in the South and West, specific drugs are sometimes traded for other drugs.

Users in half of the cities sometimes transport other drugs in exchange for their own drugs. For example, “ponying” is common in El Paso, where users act as mules, bringing drugs from Mexico and keeping a portion of the drugs for themselves.

Similarly, in Washington, DC, some users work for their dealer, selling drugs in exchange for their own drugs. In Portland (ME), heroin users support their habits by buying more

heroin in nearby Massachusetts areas and then selling it locally. Sometimes users steal their drugs, as reported in seven sites, including Portland, where OxyContin<sup>®</sup> is sometimes obtained via pharmacy break-ins.

Services are occasionally exchanged for drugs. For example, in Chicago and Detroit, drug “shoppers” get to keep a portion of the drugs they buy for other users. Also in Detroit in exchange for drugs, some people (“hitters”) inject other users with hard-to-find veins, and some act as “lookouts.”

What happens to the cash collected by street dealers? Law enforcement sources report a wide range of cash-related activities—from sophisticated money laundering operations down to dealers simply “spending it” (as in Billings)—depending on the city and the dealer level.

Money laundering is mentioned in Boston, Memphis, Miami, and

#### Exhibit 5.

How do dealers and buyers communicate?

| Dealers            |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Face-to-face       | Baltimore, Columbia (SC), Detroit, Honolulu, Memphis, New York, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Seattle, Washington, DC |
| Cell phones/Pagers | Boston, Columbia, Denver, Detroit, El Paso, Los Angeles, Miami, Philadelphia, Seattle                            |
| Telephone          | Baltimore, Denver, Honolulu, Portland (ME), St. Louis  |
| Word of mouth      | Chicago, Los Angeles, New Orleans  |
| Couriers           | Philadelphia   |
| Hand signals       | Philadelphia   |
| Internet           | Memphis  |
| Phone cards        | Miami  |
| Buyers             |  |

Sources: Law enforcement respondents



Portland (ME). Miami is a particular attraction because it is a tremendous financial center, with many international banks, and because it is a vacation spot where dealers can combine business with pleasure. Several techniques are used in that city: (1) a black market peso exchange—dealers use street drug money to purchase computers, appliances, and other electronics from small businesses around the airport area, then they export the items to Colombia, where a black market shopping center sells them to the public; (2) wire transfers and moneygrams; (3) rental cars used for driving cash to Mexican border areas in Texas or California; (4) off-shore banking; and (5) ATM transactions—cash is deposited at local locations and withdrawn from machines in Colombia.

In Boston, some Dominicans launder money through small storefront businesses. In nearby Portland, one person was recently indicted on 170 counts of laundering money acquired from selling marijuana. Most drug money in that city, however, goes to support the individual sellers' habits or else to "re-up" their supplies acquired on trips to nearby areas, such as Lawrence and Lowell (MA), parts of New Hampshire, and New York City.

As in Portland, street dealers in other cities often use their cash to pay off their suppliers or re-up their supplies, thus perpetuating the cycle. Any leftover cash becomes profit, often used for entertainment, as reported in St. Louis. The Baltimore sellers hold onto the cash for a while until they

have an amount substantial enough to take to their suppliers. The Columbia sellers transfer cash to their suppliers (who are located in Texas or California if they supply marijuana) using several techniques: they wire the money; they use air and train travelers; or they send express-mail packages of items filled with cash (such as shoes). Express mail services are also used by higher level dealers in Sioux Falls.

Within many cities, money is passed from one dealer level to the next one up via several techniques. In Philadelphia, for example, cash passes from buyer to "case worker" to "manager" to higher leader via cars, hand-to-hand exchange, bikes, motorcycles, or dropoffs at safe locations. Higher level dealers then use the money to buy real estate, buy

**Exhibit 6.**  
**What else, besides cash, is exchanged for drugs?**

| Regions   |                  | Mostly cash | Property/<br>Merchandise | Sex | Other drugs | Transport drugs | Steal the drug | Other   |
|-----------|------------------|-------------|--------------------------|-----|-------------|-----------------|----------------|---|
| Northeast | Boston, MA       | ✓           | ✓                        | ✓   |             |                 |                |   |
|           | New York, NY     | ✓           | ✓                        | ✓   | ✓           | ✓               | ✓              |   |
|           | Philadelphia, PA | ✓           | ✓                        | ✓   |             |                 |                | Guns  |
|           | Portland, ME     | ✓           | ✓                        | ✓   |             | ✓               | ✓              |   |
| South     | Baltimore, MD    | ✓           | ✓                        | ✓   |             | ✓               |                | Guns  |
|           | Columbia, SC     |             | ✓                        |     |             |                 |                |   |
|           | El Paso, TX      |             | ✓                        | ✓   | ✓           | ✓               | ✓              | Charity gifts; shoplifted merchandise                   |
|           | Memphis, TN      |             | ✓                        | ✓   | ✓           | ✓               | ✓              |   |
|           | Miami, FL        | ✓           | ✓                        | ✓   | ✓           |                 |                | Stolen/shoplifted merchandise/groceries                 |
|           | New Orleans, LA  | ✓           | ✓                        | ✓   | ✓           | ✓               |                | Food Stamps   |
|           | Washington, DC   | ✓           | ✓                        | ✓   |             | ✓               |                |   |
| Midwest   | Chicago, IL      | ✓           |                          | ✓   |             |                 |                | Drug buying services                                    |
|           | Detroit, MI      | ✓           | ✓                        | ✓   | ✓           |                 | ✓              | "hit" other user's vein;<br>buy/lookout for other users |
|           | Sioux Falls, SD  | ✓           | ✓                        | ✓   |             |                 |                |   |
|           | St. Louis, MO    | ✓           | ✓                        | ✓   |             | ✓               | ✓              |   |
| West      | Billings, MT     | ✓           | ✓                        | ✓   |             |                 |                |   |
|           | Denver, CO       | ✓           | ✓                        | ✓   |             | ✓               | ✓              | Precursors  |
|           | Honolulu, HI     |             | ✓                        | ✓   | ✓           |                 |                |   |
|           | Los Angeles, CA  | ✓           | ✓                        | ✓   | ✓           |                 |                |   |
|           | Seattle, WA      | ✓           | ✓                        | ✓   | ✓           | ✓               |                | Food Stamps   |

Source: Law enforcement (L) and epidemiologic/ethnographic (E) respondents



Dealers dispose of cash from drug sales in many ways, according to law enforcement sources in many *Pulse Check* cities...

- **Money laundering:** Boston, Memphis, Miami, Portland (ME)
- **“Re-upping” supplies:** Baltimore, Columbia (SC), Honolulu, Los Angeles, Portland (ME), Sioux Falls, and St. Louis
- **Entertainment:** St. Louis
- **Passing money up the supply ladder:** Chicago, El Paso, Memphis, New Orleans, Philadelphia, and Seattle

cars, or make wire transfers and bank deposits. In El Paso, cash from heroin sales works its way from the buyer through the various levels and eventually to Mexico via body carriers and vehicles and, recently, with purchases of money orders. In Seattle, money moves almost immediately, within a small geographic area, to the next tier of suppliers, usually carried on someone’s person or by car or bus. Multi-tiered passing of drug money is also mentioned in Chicago, Memphis, and New Orleans.

What deters street drug buys? An intense and visible police presence is, by far, the most effective, albeit short-term, deterrent, according to law enforcement and epidemiologic/ethnographic sources. The other most commonly reported deterrents are other police interventions (such as anti-terrorist activities), media coverage, overdoses, supply or demand changes, neighborhood changes, and legislative/sentencing changes.

Several sources suggest additional deterrent measures that might be effective in their communities’ future efforts:

- **Baltimore, MD<sup>L</sup>:** Knock down abandoned buildings.
- **Chicago, IL<sup>E</sup>:** Find legitimate jobs for people who sell drugs.
- **Los Angeles, CA<sup>E</sup>:** Make large local-level busts to force dealers indoors or stay low key.
- **Memphis, TN<sup>E</sup>:** Increase media coverage of drug-related crime to make more people afraid to buy drugs.
- **Portland, ME<sup>L</sup>:** Use the existing joint task force, which includes nearby Lawrence and Lowell, Massachusetts, to increasingly target suppliers from those areas.
- **St. Louis, MO<sup>E</sup>:** Target prevention efforts toward specific drugs, specific populations, and specific geographic areas.
- **Sioux Falls, SD<sup>L</sup>:** Give classes on methamphetamine lab detection to different community groups; try to get a precursor law that parallels the Federal law.

How have recent targeted law enforcement or legislative policy directives or initiatives impacted on communities’ drug problems? Law enforcement and epidemiologic/ethnographic sources report a range of recent initiatives, particularly those involving new precursor laws and other efforts targeting methamphetamine. Other widely reported efforts include targeting diverted OxyContin<sup>®</sup>, rescheduling other drugs, enacting stricter sentencing

guidelines, and diverting offenders into treatment.

How can local drug market activity be disrupted in the future? *Pulse Check* law enforcement sources suggest a wide range of possible strategies. While these individual opinions do not reflect the views of any government entity, they might be of interest to decisionmakers and policymakers at the local, State, and Federal levels.

- Alter courts’ focus to emphasize dealers, not users (for example, expand drug courts and in-custody treatment opportunities).
- Identify new legal drugs with abuse potential, and place them on the controlled list within 6 months. This strategy works better at the Federal level, where sanctions tend to be more punitive, than at the State level.
- Target out-of-State suppliers, because arresting local suppliers and dealers has a short-term effect.
- Map drug calls-for-service to help pinpoint locations for law enforcement activities.
- Increase community involvement.
- Enact more precursor laws at the Federal and State levels.
- Adopt stricter mandates and penalties for smaller drug dealers.
- Tax convicted drug dealers.
- Change local nuisance abatement laws to require more convictions over longer time periods.
- Strengthen existing laws to ensure that dealers are not released on technicalities.

Recent deterrents in specific *Pulse Check* communities...

***An intense and visible police presence is, by far, the most effective, albeit short-term, deterrent, according to sources in 12 cities:***

|                          |                             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Baltimore <sup>L,E</sup> | Memphis <sup>L</sup>        |
| Boston <sup>L,E</sup>    | New Orleans <sup>L,E</sup>  |
| Chicago <sup>L</sup>     | New York <sup>L,E</sup>     |
| Denver <sup>E</sup>      | Philadelphia <sup>L,E</sup> |
| Detroit <sup>L,E</sup>   | St. Louis <sup>L,E</sup>    |
| El Paso <sup>L,E</sup>   | Seattle <sup>L,E</sup>      |

*Such a presence usually involves uniformed police or marked units. For example:*

- **New York, NY<sup>L</sup>:** When police presence declines, drug activity increases, as was the case immediately after September 11.
- **Philadelphia, PA<sup>L,E</sup>:** The recent Operation Safe Streets project to deter drug market activities has placed uniformed police at more than 200 open-air corners. The effort has already had an impact—a decrease in outdoor drug sales and fewer potential buyers coming from Delaware, South New Jersey, and suburban Philadelphia areas. Sources report it is now easier to obtain larger wholesale-level quantities than smaller quantities.
- **St. Louis, MO<sup>L,E</sup>:** Police periodically target low-level dealers and arrest them all at the same time—a recent sweep, for example, focused on methamphetamine.
- **Seattle, WA<sup>L,E</sup>:** Such saturation takes two forms: in one organized semiannual interjurisdictional effort to disrupt the illegal drug market, a large number of uniformed police move into areas known for illegal drug activity; in a more episodic, spontaneous response to local merchants' complaints, an increased police presence is used to displace buyers and sellers, causing specific drug sales activities to be curtailed, at least temporarily.

***Other police interventions:***  
*Other types of police interventions, such as the following, have had deterrent effects in some cities.*

- **Baltimore, MD<sup>L</sup>; Billings, MT<sup>E</sup>; Los Angeles, CA<sup>L</sup>; and El Paso, TX<sup>L</sup>:** Undercover operations
- **Columbia, SC<sup>L</sup>:** An ongoing community-based operation involving an undercover officer assigned to make buys for a 1-month period, then arrest and issue sealed indictments to 15–20 sellers at a time
- **El Paso, TX<sup>L</sup>:** An undercover rave operation in December that stopped the spread of raves from New Mexico
- **Memphis, TN<sup>L</sup>:** Large sting operations; interdiction of outgoing parcels; increased intelligence on traffickers; anti-terrorist and money laundering operations and drug distribution operations
- **Miami, FL<sup>E</sup>:** A Federal and State coordinated effort to “clean up” cargo smuggling on the Miami River (While successful, it has also dispersed that type of trafficking to other small ports).
- **New Orleans, LA<sup>L</sup>:** Reverse stings
- **St. Louis, MO<sup>E</sup>:** Increased surveillance activity along Highway 44 (main connection to Mexico)

***Media coverage:***  
*Deterrent effects have been noted after the following.*

- **Boston, MA<sup>L</sup>:** Names of actual buyers and sellers published in newspapers
- **Memphis, TN<sup>E</sup>:** Media coverage of drug-related shootings (some involving young children) and methamphetamine lab seizures
- **Miami, FL<sup>E</sup>:** News stories about crack-sales-related violence
- **Portland, ME<sup>L</sup>:** A series of special articles on heroin, publicity about major arrests, and stories about recent methadone overdoses
- **Philadelphia, PA<sup>L</sup>:** Press stories about arrests
- **Sioux Falls, SD<sup>L</sup>:** Media publicity of recent drug busts



Recent deterrents in specific *Pulse Check* communities (continued)...

***A rash of overdoses:***

*The “scare” effects of recent overdose outbreaks are reported in several cities.*

- **Boston, MA<sup>L</sup>:** Increases in overdoses have been a deterrent.
- **Columbia, SC<sup>E</sup>:** A recent increase in overdoses and overdose deaths, resulting from heroin being mixed with pure fentanyl, slowed down heroin purchases for a period of time.
- **El Paso, TX<sup>E</sup>:** Six heroin overdoses during the Mardi Gras season frightened some users into switching to other drugs or buying from other dealers.
- **Portland, ME<sup>L,E</sup>:** Heroin purchases slowed down following a dramatic increase in overdoses among the newer OxyContin® addicts who were switching to heroin. (These addicts had not built up the tolerance of old-time users, and they lacked an understanding about unpredictable heroin purity.)
- **St. Louis, MO<sup>E</sup>:** GHB is now rarely reported since a series of deaths 2 years ago.

***Supply/demand changes:***

*Availability, price, and cash flow have had deterrent effects in some cities.*

- **Baltimore, MD<sup>E</sup>:** Lack of availability
- **Columbia, SC<sup>E</sup>:** Periodic increases in marijuana prices
- **New Orleans, LA<sup>E</sup>:** Buyers’ periodic lack of cash
- **St. Louis, MO<sup>E</sup>:** Price increases

***Neighborhood changes:***

*Overt drug activity has declined in some cities following changes in the physical environment.*

- **Boston, MA<sup>E</sup>:** Revitalization of neighborhoods, with businesses coming in, economic prosperity, and improved appearance
- **Boston, MA<sup>L</sup>:** Neighborhoods known to be strict
- **Chicago, IL<sup>E</sup>:** Gentrification of neighborhoods
- **Miami, FL<sup>L</sup>:** Nuisance abatement laws in nearby Ft. Lauderdale make property owners responsible for criminal activity. These laws are part of their city revitalization program, which approaches crime prevention through environmental design.

***Anti-terrorist activities:***

*Drug-deterrent side effects are sometimes noted.*

- **El Paso, TX<sup>L,E</sup>:** Shutting down bridges, checking cars, and heavy border patrols after September 11 had an immediate but short-lived effect on drug sales and trafficking.
- **Los Angeles, CA<sup>E</sup>:** Narcotics officers have been deployed to anti-terrorism efforts since September 11.
- **Portland, ME<sup>E</sup>:** The Canadian border has been tightened up since September 11.
- **Memphis, TN<sup>L</sup>:** In looking for terrorist activities, police are stumbling on drug operations.
- **Washington, DC<sup>L,E</sup>:** Tightened security since September 11 has also helped catch drug traffickers and dealers. On the other hand, dealers might be more brazen because they perceive that police have been diverted to anti-terrorism efforts.

***Other deterrents:***

- **Baltimore, MD<sup>L</sup>:** Using video cameras; changing two-way streets into one-way streets in order to make it more difficult to get to normal dealing locations



- Conduct street corner conspiracy investigations: have undercover officers make buys at one location from several people on several occasions; “follow the money” from runners to liaisons, to higher-ups, to money collectors, and so forth; charge all parties, not just those in possession; once the number of street dealers is depleted at a location, have other city and community agencies “clean up” the area; maintain an increased police presence.
- Continue public education activities, such as press releases and other efforts to increase media attention.
- Maintain a proactive approach to enforcement at the local level, similar to national-level agencies like the DEA or HIDTA.
- Expand drug courts and in-custody treatment.

The 20 *Pulse Check* epidemiologic/ethnographic sources were asked what gaps or challenges, if any, they perceive in their specific communities’ current law enforcement efforts. These individuals offered several recommendations, including the following:

Recent initiatives have had impact in many *Pulse Check* cities...

*New precursor laws and other efforts targeting methamphetamine:*

- **Billings, MT<sup>E</sup>:** The area was recently designated as a methamphetamine high traffic area, enabling law enforcement to receive more funding.
- **Boston, MA<sup>E</sup>:** The precursor law has changed.
- **Denver, CO<sup>E</sup>:** Since a recent precursor law change, an offender can be arrested for only one or more precursors and does not have to be cooking them.
- **Detroit, MI<sup>E</sup>:** A methamphetamine task force was recently formed.
- **Los Angeles, CA<sup>E</sup>:** A new system targeting methamphetamine precursors limits the number of over-the-counter purchases and alerts the DEA to large-quantity purchases. Also, law enforcement efforts targeting farm robberies are aimed at methamphetamine manufacturers who rob fertilizer supplies from farms.
- **St. Louis, MO<sup>E</sup>:** Many efforts against precursor chemicals (not particularly new), such as laws and training of pharmacy staff about bulk purchases of cold medicines, have made it more difficult for people to cook methamphetamine, especially in rural areas.
- **Seattle, WA<sup>E</sup>:** A methamphetamine task force has raised citizen awareness about sights and smells that help locate labs in their own neighborhoods.
- **Seattle, WA<sup>L</sup>:** New methamphetamine precursor legislation, passed during the January–April statewide session, has increased the number of prohibited or restricted precursors.
- **Sioux Falls, SD<sup>E</sup>:** A methamphetamine awareness campaign includes community education. The recent increase in lab seizures may be due to the community’s heightened awareness about what to look for.

*Stricter sentencing:*

- **Boston, MA<sup>E</sup>:** GHB has become a scheduled drug.
- **Denver, CO<sup>E</sup>:** GHB has recently become a Schedule I drug.
- **Detroit, MI<sup>L,E</sup>:** Ecstasy is now a Schedule I drug, with increased penalties for possession with intent to deliver.



- Continue joint cooperation among various law enforcement and public health entities.
- Increase funding, staffing, and resources for various activities, such as: sustained police patrols; targeted efforts for prevention, education, and outreach; comprehensive data monitoring efforts;
- and research on trends, services, and policy.
- Simultaneously address the interrelated issues of illegal drugs and terrorism.
- Address treatment issues in conjunction with law enforcement efforts.
- Deal with problems unique to individual communities' geographic location, economic situation, and legislative policies.
- Pay more attention to diversion and illicit sales of prescription products.

Recent initiatives have had impact in many *Pulse Check* cities (continued)...

*Efforts targeting diverted OxyContin®:*

- **Columbia, SC<sup>E</sup>:** During a 4-month period while legislation removed OxyContin® from the Medicaid extension list, the number of clients abusing that drug declined. However, when the policy was rescinded or relaxed, the number rebounded and then surpassed earlier numbers.
- **Philadelphia, PA<sup>L</sup>:** Government rescheduling of diverted OxyContin®, and punitive action such as sentencing the infamous “Dr. Oxy” to 30 years in jail, have stopped the momentum.
- **Portland, ME<sup>L,E</sup>:** Numerous efforts regarding diverted OxyContin®, such as changes in prescription policies and educating prescribers, have caused declines since last year in the number of prescriptions and in the size of pharmacy stock. Consequently, availability of the diverted drug is down and prices are up. However, while these measures have affected buys, they have not affected use: some newer users have been switching to heroin.

*Rescheduling of drugs:*

- **Detroit, MI<sup>L,E</sup>:** Harsher sentences for trafficking large amounts of crack (more than 650 grams) has helped jail big dealers for life; however, now most traffickers avoid this law by dealing with smaller quantities.
- **Miami, FL<sup>L</sup>:** Stricter sentencing guidelines about 3 years ago resulted in the disappearance of flunitrazepam (Rohypnol) and the decline in dealers using firearms. A Weed and Seed program has lowered prosecution criteria to 5 grams, allowing prosecution of habitual drug dealers and preventing small dealers from falling through the cracks.

*Diversion to treatment:*

- **Honolulu, HI<sup>E</sup>:** A recent State Senate bill calls for diverting nonviolent first-time drug offenders into treatment. Not enough treatment slots, however, are available to do so.
- **Los Angeles, CA<sup>E</sup>:** Data regarding the impact of Proposition 36, which diverts nonviolent offenders from incarceration to treatment, will be analyzed after the county's different data systems are linked up.
- **Memphis, TN<sup>E</sup>:** A new alcohol and other drugs program for misdemeanor drug charges is expected to have a dramatic impact.

*Other community efforts:*

- **Los Angeles, CA<sup>E</sup>:** The Los Angeles Police Department's Narcotic Hotline and the Mayor's “We Tip” program provide for confidential reporting of drug activity in specific communities.
- **Portland, ME<sup>E</sup>:** Methadone clinics are now open 7 days a week. Previously, when clinics had been closed on Sundays, some clients who got extra doses on Saturday ended up selling them.



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